The IDLER

Public Occurrences, Comment, Excursions & Rational Entertainment

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HOW TO MEET THE PRESS

In Which We Bring to Life Our Dream of a Typical White House News Conference; Also: Some Helena, Ark., History & The Saltlickham Picayune-Item Takes an Important Editorial Stand.

OTHER DOMESTIC MATTERS

(Note: The President's opening remarks have been considerably shortened to meet space requirements):

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to say a few things before we get started with the questions and answers. Mr. Taylor has flown back, as you know, to hold discussion on Viet-Nam. These discussions have been full, frank and useful. I think I should point out to you that we have several thousand men fighting there and that their enemy is communistic. Everything could be peaceful if people out there would stop bothering their neighbors and that's what we're trying to get them to do. Our major problem is winning the war and since I thought you might ask me about it I'm giving you this rundown on the situation now so we won't have to have a lot of questions later.

As regards the Atlantic alliance, I would just like to remind you that we have maintained close bonds with Europe for quite a few years. You should remember that we fought on the side of Great Britain in two major wars in this century. So we have some historic relationships here and we plan to continue them and I don't think you reporters should go around spreading the seeds of disunion within the NATO system. If and when troubles do arise, I will be sure to have George Reedy tell you all about them.

I must tell you, in candid frankness, that there has been a steady improvement in the economic picture. I have some charts here that I thought you would be interested in. The first chart, over here, compares the standard of living of an American today, during the Eisenhower Administration and during the middle thirties. You will note that there has been quite an improvement here. I have asked the Department of Labor to make a further comparison — shown on this second chart — with the living standards of an American at the time of the War of 1812. You will see why we in this Administration are pretty pleased with the progress we are making.

This third chart shows the noticeable increase in soybean exports during the last half of the current fiscal year. The President's economic advisors say that this is a good sign and I thought you would be interested.

As far as the budget goes I would like to tell you that we hope to keep it below last year's level while spending more. This, as you probably realize, is a difficult problem, but the Bureau of the Budget is working on this now. We do not consider it im-

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The Idler

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Editor: sam smith
The Idler
125 Fifth St. N.E.
Washington 2, D. C.
202-546-9662

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6 State St.
Warren, R. I.
401-245-8888

possible since we have already proved we can do it in the field of government employment. Last year we added 30,000 persons to governmental agencies and yet managed to cut the number of employees on the Federal payroll by 6000. If this seems a little confusing, I suggest you reporters talk to the people over in the Budget. You might learn a little economics while you're over there, too.

I have this day signed an agreement with the Republic of Zambia concerning the exchange of desalination experts and since some of you might want it, I'll read it to you.

(The President read the 82-page document.)

I also have a list of the 325 new GS-2's hired by the Coast and Geodetic Survey, which goes as follows:

(The President read the names.)

Now, we have about three minutes left for questions.

Q: Mr. President, there are growing signs that the Administration will take more drastic action in South Viet-Nam. Is this true?

A: I believe I've told you several times, John, that when I'm ready to take drastic action, I'll let you know. Now can you imagine Ambassador Taylor and I, sitting here in the shade of the trees on the banks of the Perdernales, plotting drastic action? The only drastic action I know about is what I read in your column.

Q: Mr. President, some observers say that President DeGaulle and you are very far apart on almost every major issue affecting Europe. Would you comment on that?

George Reedy: He'll Tell You

A: Why don't you just write what I tell you? I've got a fine staff with some fine men on it and they'll give the full background on any issue when we're ready to release it. Instead you go running out on a limb and then come here asking me to pull you back in. Now President DeGaulle was a great war leader and is currently the president of an important country and I have high regard for him. I've told you that many times. If we have any problems, we'll just invite him down here to the ranch, rope a few cows, see how well he rides a horse, and then, with the sun setting over the plains, we can eat barbeque spare ribs and talk matters over and everything will be just hunkydory.

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Q: Mr. President, could it be possible that we wouldn't have to speculate so much if you were a little more precise in your answers?

A: That's an iffy question and pretty speculative at that. Let us remember what the prophet Isaiah said: "Come—"

Q: Thank you, Mr. President.

Most interesting Christmas card received last year came from Lynn Moore of the Interagency Committee on Oceanography. The card contained a reproduction of Benjamin Franklin's chart of the Gulf Stream.

Lynn sent us not only the card but the engraving from which it was made, along with a note saying that he could find no information concerning this interesting chart.

We set to work and came up with the story on the chart as told by none other than Mr. Franklin himself. The chart and the description will be found on the center fold of this issue.

Benjamin Franklin did not discover the Gulf Stream, nor was he the first one to chart it. This versatile gentleman did, however, make the first scientific observations of the ocean current including extensive measurements of the temperature of the water.

The other day we had a cup of coffee with Mrs. Meadie Gertrude Harris Dienston, a 76-year old lady who moved up to Washington recently from Memphis to live near her daughter and son-in-law.

Back in 1902, when she was only 14, Mrs. Dienston was a telephone operator in Helena, Arkansas. "They used to let you work, didn't matter how old you were," she told us.

"Nowadays they wouldn't let little children work. But then you could.

"My sister, she was just 12, and she worked as an operator too. My, she was fast. She could outbeat all of us making those connections."

"The quickest one they made chief operator and my sister was quicker than all of us. They didn't leave her there long, though. She was too young. But they made her chief operator for awhile just to please her."

We asked Mrs. Dienston what the work was like.

"It was hard work, lots harder than it is nowadays. They've got lights and the switches right close by. But back then if you wanted to make a connection you had to reach way up, like this."

She rose from her chair, reached up, and made an imaginary connection.

"Each girl had 119 connections in front of her. There were maybe six or eight girls there and if you wanted to make a call with numbers down at the other end of the room you had to use one of the side connections that ran up and down the side.

"Now they've got the switches right close by but then you had to reach way up."

She demonstrated again.

"When a call came in, a tab would drop to show the number that had called. Then you had to put a plug in the hole under the tab, reach up and put the tab back again, and say, 'Number, please.'

"They started you out on local calls and then they let you make long-distance. That was harder. When the call was over you had to pull back the time-stamp and stamp the ticket. You had to get the time right or it was bad for you."

How did one know when the call was finished, we asked.

"Well, you could cut in, that's what you had to do, cut in and listen to see if they were still talking, you see. You wouldn't listen long enough to hear what they were saying you know, but you could tell if they were still talking."

Telephone operators had a chance to know what was going on around town, didn't they?

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"Sure, they did. But you weren't supposed to listen in. You could if you wanted to be mean, you see, but it wasn't proper.

"You had to get on to see if they got their party, don't you know. Had to get on enough to get them together and hear when they got off. But you weren't meant to listen. That wasn't proper, you see.

"Each girl had 119 connections in front of her and sometimes you would be going like this, you see, if there was a fire or something."

The former Helena, Arkansas, operator moved her hands rapidly back and forth in front of her.

"My sister, now she was fast, she could answer two phones in the time it took others to answer one. She was only 12 and I was just 14.

"My mother took to making loose blouses for us because we used to tear shirts we wore reaching around all the time.

"You had to remember every number in the town. Like number 2, that was Iron Mountain Depot and number 3 that was Warfield and Butts, you see, and number 5 was Cam Bisco and like that. And you had to remember everyone. Someone called up and said they wanted Warfield and Butts you had to know that was number 3.

"The office was across Forest Park from our house and they told us don't dawdle in Forest Park so my sister and me when we would get to Forest Park we would start running and we make it across real fast.

"We worked an eight hour day. Sometimes you had to do relief work and sometimes you had to work at night. I remember one night I was meant to work until midnight and this other girl she was meant to work from midnight 'til seven the next morning. Well, she was a lazy girl, don't you know, and she wouldn't get up and so I worked all that night 'til seven in the morning.

"Next day I told them I wanted to work day work. I didn't tell them that I had worked all night cause I didn't want to get this other girl fired."

How long did she work there?

"Oh Lord, I worked a long time. I didn't keep track of the dates. But I could do the work now as good as I could then. Now they've got lights and plugs nearby. You just sit there all day putting in the plugs. It's easy work, lots easier than housework or some of the other things you have to do to make a dollar."

We finished our coffee and got up to leave.

"That was a long time ago; things have changed," she reminded us as we said good-bye.

Mr. Harvey Fersten reports that while fishing off Montauk Point, Long Island, with a group of friends, he sighted a 17-foot great white shark that rose five feet out of the water next to the boat.

The fishermen attempted to hook onto the giant maneating shark, but failed. They subsequently harpooned the creature and were towed by it for more than four hours. Its weight was estimated at over two tons.

THE SALTLICKHAM PICAYUNE-ITEM has come out in favor of Senator Carl Curtis for President in 1968. Charlie Thurston, the editor, says he's getting started early because it will take a while to whip up popular sentiment for the Nebraska Republican.

According to *The Item,* Curtis is a loyal supporter of the cause of Barry Goldwater, a brilliant interrogator, and unwavering in his belief in good old Americanism.

The Item said that it liked Curtis' comment after the election that he was going to keep on wearing his Barry Goldwater button even though the Republicans lost. "That's the sort of loyalty we need," was the paper's comment.

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And those Bobby Baker hearings. *The Item* loved them. "Senator Curtis," it said, "demonstrated his investigative skill in his biting questions to that leftist intellectual Matthew McClosky, who sneakily refused to take the Fifth Amendment but used the witness chair as a forum for his own ideas.

"His credentials are impeccable, Senator Goldwater called him 'my little tiger.' The Americans for Constitutional Action gave him a 93% correct score on his voting record.

"Everyone seems to be busy advising the Republican Party as to how the moderates can regain power. But who is advising the conservatives how to keep power?

"This is the task we have assumed and the key to the problem is Carl Curtis. Nominate Senator Carl Curtis and we will have true, fearless leadership for those 26 million Americans who can't be wrong."

It went on like that for some time, but I just wanted to give you the flavor. My own feeling is that the Republican Party will have to put more than a little tiger in their ranks to get going again.

Elizabeth gave a demonstration of one of those new vegetable slicing machines at the Farm Bureau supper the other night. You know the type, the one that makes 1700 julienne potatoes in three minutes. Well, Elizabeth was such a big success she had to do seven encores and by the time she got through we were all standing hip deep in julienne potatoes. Bill Wilson scooped them up and put them in the back of his pickup truck to use as mulch for his garden. Charlie Thurston says that next spring Bill will have the only roses in the county with potato bugs.

Little Sally Wilson, that's Bill's youngest daughter, gave a demonstration on behalf of the 4-H. Climax came when she announced, "Now I would like to show you how to make egg nog, the healthy, 4-H way." I told Bill I preferred unhealthy egg nog. He agreed so we went home and made some.

It was the warmest Christmas in years here. Fact was, it was so warm, Elizabeth came down with a psychosomatic case of goldenrod fever.

Just the same, it was a nice holiday and we appreciated all the Christmas cards sent us. Thank you, readers.

—*Uncle Abner*

When President Johnson appointed John Conner, President of Merck & Co., as Secretary of Commerce, we decided it was time to go back to those 1959 drug hearings and read them over.

Made interesting reading under the circumstances. Turns out Mr. Conner spent two days testifying before Senator Kefauver's committee that was investigating administered prices in the drug industry.

Here's what Kefauver discovered:

—While Merck's profits were not as high as some drug firms, they were still twice as high as manufacturing generally.

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—Merck's prices, in the case of Prednisone, were identical with those of two other large firms, while more than twice as much as several smaller companies.

—In February 1959, Merck bid on a contract with the government's Military Medical Supply Agency for Prednisone. Merck's bid was $63.50 a thousand tablets. At the same time Merck was selling the tablets to druggists at $170 a thousand. Low bidder was a smaller firm that supplied the same product for $20.98 a thousand. Said Senator Kefauver: "Mr. Conner, I really can't understand how you can sell to the government at just about a third of the price you sell to the pharmacist . . . That doesn't seem right to me."

—Merck's advertising contained, according to Kefauver, "overstatements" including the claim that a certain drug had no "worrisome side effects" when side-effects actually had been uncovered.

—The committee also raised serious questions about Merck's patent licensing agreements. Mr. Conner as Secretary of Commerce would have jurisdiction over the Patent Office.

Mr. Conner is the man who was president of this company. Mr. Conner is the man who exercised a sizable amount of Merck stock options *after* being nominated to be Secretary of Commerce. Mr. Conner is the man who has expressed views on foreign trade that would appear to be at odds with the Administration's own more liberal policies. Mr. Conner is a man we'll be watching pretty closely in the months to come.

Social scientists report that they have yet to find a French Restaurant without the motto *Un repas sans vin est une journee sans soleil* displayed somewhere on the premises.

THE IDLER'S JOURNAL

Whenever I hear a politician or a professor speaking of the "pursuit of excellence," I think of the hamburger.

If we are going to pursue excellence, let us begin here. How can we hope to persuade the underdeveloped peoples of the world to follow in the six-lane path of righteousness we have prescribed if such a typically American product as the hamburger remains a disgrace to the tongue and the eye?

Once the hamburger was a food of which we could be proud. We could walk into any restaurant in the country and not feel embarrassed if we suggested to a foreign visitor, "Try a hamburger." Even when piled high with mustard, relish, catsup, and chopped onions, the juicy meat asserted itself against the onslaught of condiments. One sandwich and you were satisfied, stomach filled and soul replenished with national pride.

Today the hamburger tastes and looks like a grilled Sight-Saver, hammered into a membrane of fat whose thickness can be measured only with the aid of the most sensitive instrument. It lacks aesthetic appeal and its ability to appease hunger is indicated by the fact that at least one chain of stands sells hamburgers by the bag.

Not only has the size of the hamburger decreased, its contents have become highly suspicious. Excessive fat, artificial coloring and flour have been added in quantities that makes the beef content seem almost an afterthought.

The seeker after a good hamburger has recourse only in that creation of modern marketing, the chopped sirloin steak. Even here he can not be sure, for the average restaurant appears to be under the impression that anything that comes out of a steer that

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will go through the grinder can be defined as "sirloin." Also, one can never be certain that he won't receive a grilled flour patty when he orders chopped steak.

The only suggestion to the consumer that I can make is that he order his chopped sirloin steak rare. When it arrives cut it open and check the consistency. If it appears well cooked there is a good chance that it never had enough red meat in the first place to qualify as chopped steak. All one can do at this point is murmur those words that are the last refuge of the man who would rather suffer hunger than lose his dignity: "Take it back."

THE IDLER

THE ABOLITION OF PROPERTY

LOOK MA, NO EQUITY

By Lewis Smith

Late in 1963, in a leading business review, Professor Ferdinand F. Mauser stated, "the principal of ownership of material possessions by individuals is fast becoming an anachronism". Startling as this assertion may seem, apparently conceived in the midst of the first Goldwater boom, it may not be daring enough. A look around the United States economy gives us reason to believe that we may see the abolition of property long before we see the abolition of poverty.

The abolition of property does not mean the abolition either of things or of ownership. If assets could talk, each and every one would undoubtedly assert that its name was recorded in such-and-such an inventory, bank account or subsidiary ledger; that the documents relating to its acquisition could be found in such-and-such a file; and that it was included in the balance sheet of X enterprise, agency or individual. In this sense, property has existed almost everywhere for thousands of years and will undoubtedly continue to do so into the forseeable future, if only so we can write precise job descriptions for its custodians. In fact, the number and variety of things owned is increasing at a very rapid rate. Science and technology have caused a population explosion in new products. Real estate titles for the Sahara Desert, the Antarctic and the surface of the moon are only a few years away. The traditional three mile limit for national waters is being rapidly stretched, already to two hundred miles in one case. Not even international waters, or what is left of them, are safe from man's passion for dividing up, labeling and assigning everything in creation. We will surely live to see fishing and submarine mineral rights elaborately defined and parceled out, by species, depth, current, season, etc.

What is really important about property as a concept and what has changed from time to time throughout the human experience, sometimes radically, is the nature of the rights and responsibilities which ownership conveys, that is, property as property rights. Almost as significant has been the related matter of the distribution of ownership. In brief, what is the *meaning* of ownership and who are the owners? That is the question. We assume that most tangibles, and many intangibles, will be owned in some sense.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, with the spread of economic liberalism, industrialization and European empires, the previously existing concepts of private property were replaced or made much more precise. Indeed the new concept of property was endowed with an almost sacred and sovereign character. It came to dominate the philosophy and life of those vast areas of the world con-

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trolled by or under the influence of the Europeans and their descendants.

In its extreme form, the new concept envisaged nearly all property in the hands of individuals rather than communities, tribes, cooperatives, churches, corporations, or governments. Owners were supposed to have almost unlimited freedom to do as they wished with their possessions and to accumulate property indefinitely. The main restriction was a requirement for mutual respect between owners, but responsibilities towards non-owners and communities were held to be few and weak.

In fact, when the joint stock corporation first appeared on the economic scene, it was thoroughly denounced by the far-sighted Adam Smith as a long run enemy of individual initiative. He declared it to be incompatible with the "free enterprise system." However, men of little imagination and much ambition prevailed. In the theory and practice of property, the corporation came to be treated as an individual for most legal and economic purposes. Only later and after much human suffering, did it become apparent that thereby a monster had been unleashed instead of an elephant harnessed.

The resulting picture was nevertheless, in theory at least, one of a large number of highly autonomous units within the body of society, each unit composed of an owner and his property in whose management he would be actively involved. The great distinction and the great gap was between owners and non-owners. Users, unless using their own property, were almost entirely at the mercy of owners and therefore hardly better off than non-users. Indeed one 19th century writer was led to assert "all individual property is . . . a form of monopoly."

This then is the concept of property which we have inherited, which is still true to life in some parts of the United States and of the world, and which still shapes many people's thinking. Yet we have already arrived at one of those periods in history where the concept of property is once again undergoing a major transformation, to the extent that the reality which confronts us today bears, on balance, little resemblence to our traditional picture of it. The ownership of property is rapidly declining in importance; the rights inherent in ownership are being limited and split up. More and more they are being exercised by people who are not owners. The important distinctions in our society are now generally between users and non-users rather than between owners and non-owners. Indeed ownership is being increasingly consigned to utter abstractions, as people become more interested in access to and use of property than in ownership, which may even be considered a nuisance and a burden at times. In fact, many members of the "great American middle class" go through life without ever bothering to acquire much of an equity in anything, although their standard of living far surpasses that of the kings of old.

The origins of this change are numerous and complex, but the principle ones would seem to be the following:

1. The use of credit to buy things.

Only the Federal government is still hamstrung by the quaint notion that one should not expand one's debt as one's income and resources increase. By any measure which takes account of income, revenues or our country's economic growth, the Federal debt has increased remarkably slowly and its burden, both potential and actual, has decreased relatively speaking. On the other hand, the debt of consumers, businesses, states, municipalities and public authorities roars ever onward and upward, vigorously propelled by the irresistible desire to have now, pay later. Over the years, terms have lengthened. Credit has been applied to more and more things. In effect, this debt is never really paid off because there are always new things to buy, build or make, requiring that old debt be replaced with new as quickly as

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possible. Also it may actually be cheaper to obtain funds by borrowing and paying interest than by selling stock and paying dividends or by liquidating other investments that are ineligible for debt financing.

The end result is that a man's equity in his house, furniture, business, car, etc. may be minimal. He comes to think in terms of the size of monthly payments rather than total cost. In the family budget, debt service may become a major item, reaching as high as thirty percent in some cases, although this is probably overdoing it. Businesses are rather more conservative, especially due to their heavy reliance on internally generated funds, but not as conservative as they seem. The inadequacy of traditional accounting practices inadvertantly conceal the true significance of sale-and-lease-back operations and of subsidary corporations, each with "its own debt structure," such as General Motors Acceptance Corporation, set up to purchase the accounts receivable of the parent firm.

2. The enormous and ever increasing size, complexity, and prosperity of our economy.

a. Under the stimulus of technological progress and universal economic growth, the organizations producing goods and services have increased in size and complexity far beyond the financial and intellectual capacities of most owners. At the same time, the work of the organization has come to require thousands of different jobs, many of which require highly specialized skills and knowledges. No man can hope to master more than a fraction of them. Thus it becomes necessary to corral large numbers of owners for each firm, to secure sufficient funds and to help investors escape the penalties of underdiversification, which politely but firmly keep the owners from interfering in the business. Similarly an elaborate industrial hierarchy has been established, not merely to gain the advantages of specialization, but to keep top and middle management from messing things up on the production floor or among the electronic data processing machines.

b. In such an economy, the endless search for greater efficiency has inevitably lead to the fragmentation, among specialists, of property rights and their exercise, much as the craftsman's skills were broken down and distributed in the early days of the industrial revolution.

The end result is to separate the traditional property owner from his property by a chain of persons, both fictitious and real, which grows ever longer as pension funds, mutual funds and insurance companies begin to take over the job of investing people's money for them. Indeed, in many cases, we may speak of divorce, for the owner of old is now merely the ultimate person entitled to receive a certain portion of the net revenue after taxes generated by the assets in question. The titular owner has become a corporation, and what is the modern corporation but a great abstraction? Theoretically a stand-in for the stockholders, corporate management has become more and more autonomous. Sometimes it even must be bribed, not always successfully, to hold more than a nominal equity in the firm, through the subterfuge of stock options. Professor Gordon Donaldson of Harvard has shown clearly that significant conflicts between the financial interest of the corporation and that of the stockholders can and do arise. They are apt to be settled in favor of the corporation. Indeed the modern corporation is so large and powerful that many managers cannot in good conscience regard its operation as a purely private matter, from either the corporate or the stockholder point of view. These managers listen also to the demands of customers, suppliers, dealers, unions, governments and communities. Occasionally they may even play the role of trustees or arbitrators, rather than stockholder representatives.

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As such, they are concerned not just with dividends but with a fair distribution of the firm's income and benefits among all of the participants in its economic life. The demands in question are often asserted with sufficient forcefulness to inhibit deliberate attempts at single minded pursuit of stockholder interests. Moreover, because of diversification, the ultimate recipient of the dividends has little interest in or loyalty to any one company in his portfolio. If annoyed, he will probably sell out rather than fight management. In the end, all that remains of ownership for this recipient is a lottery ticket with a periodic pay off and the chance to vote in annual elections which bear a startling resemblance to those characteristic of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia.

3. An increasing recognition of the burdens and inefficiency of ownership, especially where property is used infrequently or obsolescence is high.

As products become more specialized and complex, both businessmen and individuals find that ownership is often costly and wasteful and may bring major headaches in the form of service and maintenance problems. It becomes more convenient to rent things or to buy on credit and trade in fairly soon. For similar motives, individuals or firms may invest their savings rather than reduce their debt. These savings often pooled with those of others, in institutions or enterprises which provide efficient management at the price of complete loss of control over one's "property." Thus there is, on the part of businessmen and individuals, a growing preference for what is, in effect, borrowing the property they use and lending the property they own. We are coming to recognize that that most efficient owner is not necessarily the most efficient user and vice versa, so we make arrangements in our economic life accordingly.

Let us look now at some specific examples of what we have been talking about. An individual buys and becomes the "owner" of a house, a car and some furniture. In fact, he is likely to have financed by far the larger part of each purchase. Unless he keeps up his payments "his property" can be fairly easily taken away from him by the lending institution. (If he did not borrow directly from a financial institution to buy this property, he will undoubtedly find that his paper has been sold to one by the vendors). This institution might be a large finance company, owned by thousands of stockholders or by a manufacturer, owned in turn by hundreds of thousands of stockholders. In any case, most of the investment in this finance company will consist of borrowed money, supplied by still other financial institutions which have pooled the resources of still more thousands of individuals.

If the financial institution is a bank, credit union, or savings and loan association, the situation becomes even more complicated, for depositors and government regulatory agencies will participate under certain circumstances in the exercise of rights with respect to the house, the car and the furniture. Who then really "owns" these items? Is the formal ownership of property very meaningful if power over that property is so conditional and capable of being shared with so many people?

Now, if this same individual saves some money, he may well put it in a savings account, pension fund, mutual fund or insurance policy rather than purchase a tangible item for cash or reduce his debt. But by doing this, he loses all practical control over his money, except the right to withdraw it, and retains only the most nominal ownership of his "property". Anyone of these institutions may take his money and reinvest it in the stock of a large corporation which the individual doesn't know or care about and over which even the institution may exercise no control except to sell out if the management displeases it. Or

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the reinvestment may be in a bond which carries only the right to periodic payments so long as there is no default. Who "owns" what here?

Then there is the syndicate that bought some land and built a hotel which was sold to, and leased back for fifty years, from an insurance company and then subleased for twenty years to a hotel chain which hired a Mr. X to operate it for them on a ten year contract. Who "owns" the hotel? Is it meaningful any longer to look only at the title deed? This hardly tells the story. Yet most of the people who have a great deal to say about how the property is used do not have clear title in any traditional sense of the word. What then has happened to property as a legal and practical concept? Obviously the building is as solid and real as ever.

OH?

"President Johnson's daughter, Lynda, and Vice President-elect Humphrey's son, Hubert III (Skip), were named honorary co-chairmen of the Young Democratic Festivities Committee of the 1965 Presidential Inaugural Committee.

"In making the announcement, J. Albert House, chairman of the committee, noted that representatives of the major youth organizations in the country are represented on the committee, which was formed on a non-political basis . . ."

—Inaugural Committee news release

And, speaking of real estate, there is the case of William Zeckendorf of Webb & Knapp. A decade ago, he merged his little real estate agency with a tottering company whose only good point was ten million dollars in cash, which he promptly ran up to three hundred million dollars in assets, mostly with borrowed money. Now Zeckendorf is on the financial ropes, but the fact that he could do legally and honestly the fantastic things he did for as long as he did helps to prove our point. The rise and fall of the now bankrupt Louis J. Glickman is a similar if shorter story. In brief, it is a case of "look Ma, no equity".

Indeed the spread of "credit happiness" to the real estate sector of our economy is cause for concern to bankers. In less than twenty years, mortgage debt has multiplied eight times and is almost as large as the national debt, with the big gains posted recently, e.g. a twenty-nine billion dollar increase in 1963. Current terms to apartment and office builders are so generous that equity is often nil, especially where appraisals are based on estimated rentals rather than construction costs. Private home owners may do almost as well by refinancing after real estate values have increased, and the banks seldom care what they do with the difference between the old loan and the new. Behind these developments lies the pressure created by the swollen assets of savings institutions as millions rush to place their property at the disposal of others. In the last two years, deposits in savings instititutions have increased by fifty billion dollars.

Turning to the industrial sector of our economy, we may quote the *Wall Street Journal* of May 12, 1964:

"The public's role in financing the growth of American industry is shrinking." Public offerings of stocks *and* bonds are at the lowest point in many years, probably *below* corporate redemptions and purchases of stock. More than half of all offerings are made privately, to pension funds, banks, insurance companies and the like. Remove a few special cases, such as American Telephone and Telegraph, and the situation is even more lopsided. In fact, probably three quarters of the existing corporate investment has been financed by cash internally generated through depreciation allowances and retained earnings or by outstanding loans to be repaid from these sources. If we examine data for recent years, it is apparent

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that this proportion is increasing. Over the last five years, new issues of stock have averaged less than $1.5 billion, with only $0.5 billion in 1963. New equity probably does not provide more than five percent of new corporate investment.

In divorcing themselves from financial dependence on outsiders, particularly individuals, corporations are taking yet another step in abolition of property. Capital is being raised largely from the customer who is voiceless as regards its disposition and could care less in any case. The stockholder is losing all control over "his" companies' capital budgeting.

The government finds it increasingly difficult to influence capital spending through manipulation of interest rates. The stock exchanges are no longer important for the raising of capital. Their principal purposes are to assist investors in outstanding issues to maintain investment mobility and diversification and to provide a legal gambling hall for speculators. The rich individual investor, idolized by many politicians and laymen, is no longer a significant figure in the *private* sector, to be granted special privileges at the expense of his fellow citizens. Indeed we must vigorously defend the progressive income tax that he abhors so that he will continue to play a significant role in the *public* sector, by buying about forty percent of the *tax-free* state, municipal, and authority bond issues!

While the modern corporation slips away from the stockholders' control, it becomes more and more important in the economy. For example, the 100 largest manufacturing corporations control nearly two thirds of the net capital assets used in manufacturing, yet practically none of them are controlled by their "owners."

A look at the distribution of stockholdings is also revealing. About twenty percent of the total value belongs to institutional investors who have almost without exception sought the income but not the responsibilities of ownership. In 1949, their share was only twelve percent. Yet in the last five years, their *net* purchases have exceeded $2.0 billion a year. This pace is expected to slow, but still they will have at least thirty percent by 1980. About forty percent belongs to less than a million persons, earning over $25,000 a year. Many of these people have "made their pile" and are in the market both to invest and to gamble. They were the most badly burned in the market drop of May 1962. (Ignoring publicity about "people's capitalism," the smaller investors had tended to reduce their holdings previously because yields compared unfavorably with those from savings accounts). The remaining forty percent belongs to over sixteen million little fellows who, economically speaking, can only be regarded as so many jackals who come late to feast modestly on the results of management efforts. Can any of these three groups be considered primariy as "property owners"?

Finally we should point out that the increasing abolition of property has stimulated the type of operation exemplified by the great soybean oil scandal. Unlike Billy Sol Estes, who struggled manfully to move fertilizer tanks around, Tino DeAngelis simply moved pieces of paper. His maneuvers exploited to the extreme those whose disinterest in property rights lead them to a mistaken disinterest in items of property.

Ironically, in the greatest "capitalist" nation on earth, the ownership of the means of production is losing all significance beyond that of the dividend check. Yet there is no inherent reason why property rights should be so important at all times and places.

The nineteenth century liberals, their twentieth century "conservative" descendents, the socialists and the communists all made a great error. They observed the temporary coincidence of property and hierarchy and assumed that therefore hierarchy in human society could only be based on property rights. In fact, historically speaking,

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hierarchy has been based on many things. In our society it is based on the *use* of property and on political power rather than ownership.

In brief, the idea of a single bundle of property rights, of an integral concept of ownership, is no longer useful to us. We prepare to pick out the particular right that interests us and get it by the appropriate means, which may well involve only nominal ownership or no ownership at all. In many situations, it may indeed be impossible for one man to gather together in his hands all the rights relating to a given asset or assets.

Once again, the great U.S. economic non-system shows up the barrenness of traditional economic thought, whether this is presented in the version of conservatism, socialism or communism. We may indeed live to see the day when property exists only in the communist countries, where the concentration of titles in the hands of the state is given meaning by the concentration of state power in the hands of the party central committee. In any case, Adolf Berle has written of *Power Without Property;* we shall go him one better and have capitalism without property. And at this point it perhaps should not even be called capitalism.

The Cocktail Party

Pushing past the potted plants,
I hid myself to hitch my pants
A knotch before re-entering
The splintering
Battle of words.

Tripping through the trivial tripe,
Withdrawing to regroup, re-light a pipe
Or to contemplate
The rate
At which absurd

Stances and glances fall to the floor:
It's not amazing that long before
All this began,
Each man
Here heard

Had already rehearsed his speech,
All mouthed the sounds, and each
Now throws it up:
We sup
Like scavenger birds. . . .

Erbin Crowell

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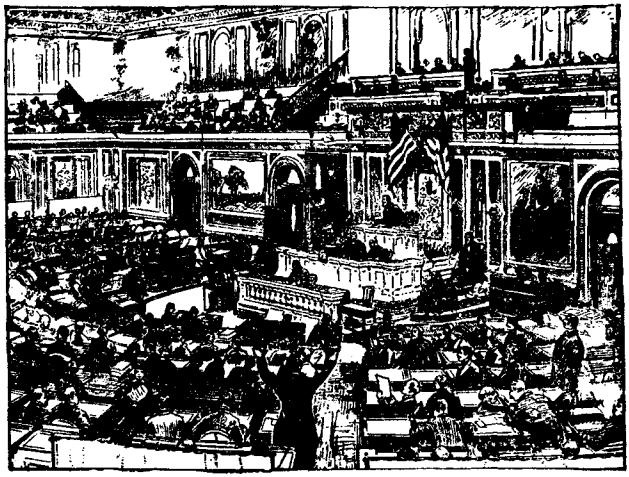
Beecham's Pills in Congress!



In CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, v. XXV., No. 11, p. 274, you will find the words:

"Beecham's Pills are just the thing!"

this statement from a member provoking loud applause. Seldom indeed does it fall to the lot of an advertiser to have his wares publicly proclaimed in the HOUSE OF CONGRESS; but in the course of a long speech during the silver debate, HON. WM. EVERETT, from the classic Back Bay district, in Boston, uttered a lofty peroration, which we quote from CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Why, sir, it reminds me of what happened in a certain very poor religious congregation in England. There was a congregation in England once that wanted to procure new hymn books, but they were very poor, and could not afford to pay for them at the ordinary prices. They understood, however, that a certain great advertising house, a business house that made patent medicines, was willing to furnish them hymn books at a penny each if they would allow some advertisements to be inserted in the books. They thought that would be no special harm, that they might have a few pages of advertisements bound up with Watts and Doddridge. Accordingly, they agreed to the proposition. The books came, duly printed, and they got down to the church on the 24th of December.

On Christmas morning, the model Christians, who had no thought of anything but religion, got up to sing. Their pastor gave out by the first line a very familiar hymn. Immediately the congregation arose to their feet, and in a few seconds were aghast to find themselves singing:

"Hark! The herald angels sing
Beecham's Pills are just the thing.
Peace on earth and mercy mild;
Two for man and one for child."

The expressed opinion of Congress ought to be "the voice of the people," and it is, among those who have suffered with torpid liver, and been relieved of bilious and nervous disorders by these world-renowned Pills.

It is a fallacy to imagine anything will sell merely because it is advertised; the fact is men are not easily gulled a second time, and every dissatisfied purchaser does ten times more harm than a satisfied one can do of good. Assuredly the enormous sale of Beecham's Pills all the world over, after a trial of half a century, demonstrates their superiority and proverbial worth.

Beecham's Pills are just the thing!

Write to B. F. Allen Company, 365 Canal Street, New York, for a little book on CONSTIPATION (its causes, consequences, and correction), sent free. If you are not within reach of a druggist, the pills will be sent by mail, 25 cents a box.

— A 19th Century Ad

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Our Ant Problem

It got into our head not so long ago that some young relatives of ours, who live in Puerto Rico, might enjoy receiving an ant farm. Spying an ad for just such a property in the *New York Times*, we rounded up $6.95 and sent away for a farm.

Well, it seems that the Federal Government's interest in agriculture extends even to ant farms, for we shortly received a nice letter from the Three R's Sales Co. of New York saying in part:

We deeply regret that due to pest control restrictions we are unable to export ants to Puerto Rico. If you prefer to have us fill your order for a giant size ant farm, with the recipient supplying his own ants we will substitute a FREE magnifying glass which many have found to be of value in studying the ants at closer range.

Now here was an interesting proposition. But how does a recipient, if he is less than six years old, go about supplying his own ants? We ourselves, with a college education and access to the Scientific American, did not feel qualified to select the proper breeding stock for this rural development program. How could we expect our young nephews and niece could do the job? We broke out the typewriter and wrote back to Mr. R.R.R.:

I am intrigued by your offer to add a free magnifying glass to the ant farm if the recipients will supply the ants. If you can answer a few questions, I feel confident that we can bring this matter to a successful conclusion:

1. How does one go about catching ants and inserting them in your ant farm?

2. How many ants are necessary?

3. With a view towards making this farm a productive success, how does one know whether he has a proper mixture of male and female ants? Is this, perhaps, the purpose of the magnifying glass?

Back comes Mr. (R)3 with a helpful little booklet called the *Ant Watcher's Manual*. This publication comes with each ant farm and, while highly informative, shows a certain pro-ant bias. For example:

ANTS ARE FUN! From the minute you stock your Ant Farm a whole new world opens up in front of your eyes . . . . a busy, bustling world that shows you that ants are a lot like the nicest people you know!

The nicest people we know are not restricted by pest control regulations. We don't find a magnifying glass helpful in observing them. But it's pointless to quibble when a whole new world is opening before our very eyes.

The answer to the question about catching ants is to be found on page 3 where the manual advises that you let the ants crawl up onto a stick or thin pencil, then you shake them down into the farm, which is enclosed in a thin glass case. This we figured the young recipients in question could do. According to the manual the fewer ants you have on your farm the better, apparently because when there is an abundant labor supply, the workers become lazy and uninteresting to view.

The worker ants are all female. The Queen ant, twice as large as an ordinary ant, mates with a male or Prince ant. This event results in the early death of the Prince. Which makes us feel that it's more fun being an uncle than an ant.

Our nephews and niece got their ant farm, and we had our questions answered. It's changed our attitude a bit. Now, when we find an ant crawling up our leg, we pause and recall that dictum from *The Ants Watchers Manual:* "Be kind to your ants." Then we flick the creature gently as possible to the ground. After all we wouldn't want to hurt her chances of getting to an ant farm.

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE?
TURN TO PAGE 22

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About the year 1769 or 1770 there was an application by the Board of Customs at Boston to the Lords of the Treasury at London, complaining that the packets between Falmouth and New York were generally a fortnight longer in their passage than the merchant ships between London and Rhode Island, and proposing instead of New York that for the future they should be ordered to Newport.

Being then concerned in the management of the American Post Office, I happened to be consulted on the occasion, and it appearing strange to me that there should be such a difference, especially when the merchant ships were generally deeper laden and more weakly manned than the packets, and had from London the whole length of the river and channel to run before they left the land of England, while the packets had only to go from Falmouth, I could not but think the fact misunderstood or misrepresented.

There happened then to be in London a Nantucket sea captain of my acquaintance, to whom I communicated the affair. He told me he believed the fact to be true, but the difference was owing to this, that the Rhode Island captains were acquainted with the Gulf Stream, while those of the English packets were not. "We are well acquainted with that stream, because in our pursuit of

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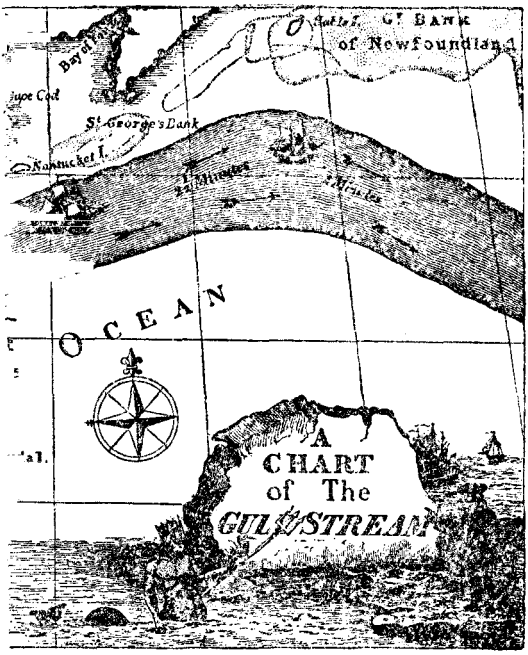

whales, which keep near the sides of it but are not met with in it, we run along the side and frequently cross it to change our side, and in crossing it have sometimes met and spoke with those packets who were in the middle of it and stemming it. We have informed them that they were stemming a current that was against them to the value of 3 miles an hour and advised them to cross it, but they were too wise to be counselled by simple American fishermen."

"When the winds are light," he added, "they are carried back by the current more than they are forwarded by the wind, and if the wind be good the subtraction of 70 miles a day from their course is of some importance."

I then observed that it was a pity that no notice was taken upon the charts and requested him to make it out for me, which he readily complied with, adding directions for avoiding it in sailing from Europe to North America. I procured it to be engraved by order from the General Post Office on the old chart of the Atlantic at Mount & Page's, Tower Hill, and copies were sent to Plymouth for the Captains who slighted it, however, but has since been printed in France, of which edition I hereto annex a copy.

—Benjamin Franklin

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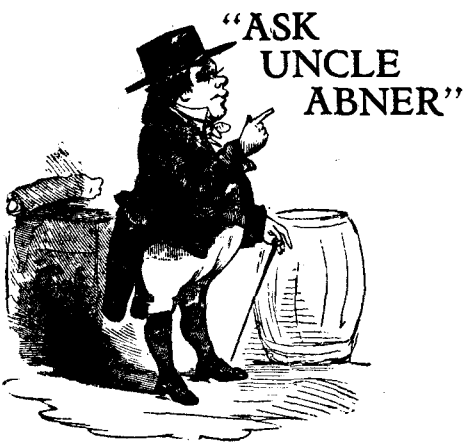

Dear Uncle Abner:
Are those new electric carving knives dangerous?
Mrs. R.F.D.

On the contrary. Mrs. Patricia Rockwell, Zumbrota, Minn., writes that prior to purchasing one her husband used to run around the house threatening her with an old-fashion knife. Now she needs only to stand a sufficient distance away from the nearest electric outlet and is quite safe.

Dear Uncle Abner:
Do you believe the Vice President should have an official residence?
M.L.F.

Not only do I believe he should have an official residence but I've got one picked out. The Russians don't like their current embassy in Washington and want to move, so why not have Mr. Humphrey take the place over? Just think, Bobby Kennedy already knows where all the hidden microphones are.

Among the signers of a full-page ad in *The New York Times* calling upon President Johnson to do something about the population explosion was Rockefeller Prentice, Chairman of the American Breeder's Service.

WHY THEY JOIN COMCIVCONUS

A junior naval officer recently told us that in a few months he would be transferred to COMCIVCONUS. It had a military ring but we didn't recognize the abbreviation. We asked him the meaning of the letters and he replied, "Commander, Civilian Forces, Continental United States." He was getting out.

COMCIVCONUS is no joke to those responsible for staffing the nation's armed forces. Officers and enlisted men join COMCIVCONUS every year at an alarming rate and annual costs run to more than a billion dollars.

In a speech last year, Vice Admiral B. J. Semmes, Chief of Naval Personnel, outlined the nature of the problem among Navy enlisted men. In fiscal 1963 he reported, 93,000 first year enlistments expired in the Navy. Only 18 per cent reenlisted.

"Our inability to keep these men in the active Navy," Admiral Semmes stated, "cost over $700 million in replacement costs."

The low retention rate of military personnel gains added importance now that the abolishment of the draft is under serious consideration. Essential to the maintainance of a draftless military is the recruiting and retention of high calibre officers and enlisted men. The prospects at present are not too hopeful.

Much of the blame can be placed on Congress and the public. In an article in the January issue, Senator Gaylord Nelson outlined some of the reforms necessary if a professional armed force independent of conscription is to be established. Decent pay and adequate housing, for example, are prime prerequisites.

Still, the military itself is responsible for a good part of the general disinterest in service careers. Officers

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giving "reupping" talks to an enlisted man often find it hard to argue with the potential reenlistee's contention that he can "do better on the outside." In too many cases he can.

It is not, however, just a matter of material rewards. Over and over again one hears the reason given by former officers and enlisted men: "I just didn't want to take any more of that crap."

What "that crap" consists of varies with the individual but is usually described by a succession of personal anecdotes in which the ex-soldier or sailor is treated in a manner which he considers an insult to his intelligence or dignity.

Each incident is petty in itself. Many could have occurred just as easily in civilian life. But the difference to the individual involved is that in civilian life the financial rewards often outweigh the hurt to one's pride. Also, one always has the opportunity to go up to one's civilian boss and say: "I quit."

The military has failed to take a deeply self-critical look at this problem primarily because it has convinced itself "that crap" is necessary to the efficient operation of the military machine.

This conviction is based in part on traditions of past centuries when it was assumed officers were educated gentlemen and enlisted men were illiterate ruffians requiring constant discipline and supervision on the most primitive level. The officer was expected to know everything and the enlisted man nothing — except how to obey orders.

Once, for example, being a naval officer was a simple matter. Drilled in the seamanly arts, hardened by strict discipline, and coated with a patina of gentlemanly grace, he set sail to defend his nation's honor aboard a ship of a design that had not changed materially for decades. Invariably he could draw upon the teachings of the past to provide solutions to the problems of the present. Under him were unsophisticated men of little education who could be set about their basic tasks with the aid of iron military law.

Today the situation has radically changed. The fresh young Naval Academy graduate may well find himself assigned to a ship packed from stem to stern with navigational, engineering and gunnery equipment of staggering technological complexity, manned by enlisted men who have received technical educations from the Navy at the cost of thousands of dollars.

The officer is expected not only to know the Rules of the Road, but enough about the million-dollar plant for which he has responsibility to insure that the specialists under him operate it properly.

How does the service train its officers to handle the changed circumstances? Vice-Admiral Hyman Rickover, a man intimately familiar with the technological demands of the modern military, has raised serious doubts whether the Naval Academy is doing the job.

Testifying before a House committee, he said:

"Academic performance of Academy graduates at our nuclear power schools has revealed that many Naval Academy midshipmen have not learned basic principles, nor do they have a firm understanding of the fundamentals of science and engineering.

Reality Missing?

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"It appears that they have memorized formulas and have learned to work standard problems; but never having comprehended the fundamental principles involved, they take away little of enduring value. The appearance of education is there, but not the reality."

A U. S. Naval Academy curriculum review board, in 1959, even admitted that "the method of instruction in most general use is quite efficient for the imparting of factual information but is not so satisfactory for the development of judgement, initiative and reasoning power."

Former Academy superintendent Rear Admiral Charles C. Kirkpatrick took sharp exception to Rickover's remarks. "The Naval Academy," he said, "has to do many things other than just turn out engineering officers to go into a Rickover nuclear power program. Who would do the jobs in combat?"

It is not improbable that some 19th century admiral once stood on a quay watching an ironclad and finally commented, "But who would do the jobs in combat?"

The traditional military reluctance to accept technological advances (cf. Billy Mitchell, the atom bomb, DeGaulle and the tanks, etc., etc.) has not disappeared.

When the demands of technology conflict with the concept of the officer standing on the bridge and crying, "Right full rudder," or standing on a ridge and crying "Charge," the old values, to the traditional military mind, still come first.

Admiral Rickover's indictment of the Academy was not just limited to the matter of technical training.

He continued:

"Naval Academy midshipmen consistently demonstrate an immaturity not seen in the NROTC students. This fact can be attributed to the generally superior academic education and the open life at civilian colleges, which tends to foster maturity. Or perhaps some practices at the Academy, such as hazing, tend to foster continuance of an adolescent attitude through and beyond the age when one should reach maturity.

"Enforcement of a military school administrative routine at the Academy is outdated. It not only takes time, but more important, it creates an unrealistic and immature atmosphere in which the young man lives and is influenced for four years.

"The detailed planning of all but a small fraction of the students' time, the enforced athletics and the provision of nearly every personal service with little call for individual thought, are detrimental to the development of the stable, mature and purposeful individual the Navy needs.

"The young men are not taught, by precept or example, that real life is actually untidy and complex, that it is possible to smother in harmony. As a result, the Naval Academy remains a childhood shelter from the struggles, uncertainties and responsibilities of life.

"During the first year, when the new midshipman's study habits are being formed, some portion of his time is spent acceding to the whims of upperclassmen. The principle of 'unquestioned obedience to orders' required in combat and the principle that 'one must learn to follow before one can learn to lead' are, at times, carried to extremes.

"These extremes give validity to the idea that a person in authority can issue an order of almost any kind on any subject and expect unquestioned obedience. Time spent in carrying out many of these childish orders and chores is wasted. More serious is the danger of training young minds in the belief that the substitution of powers of authority for thought constitutes good leadership . . .

"The weaknesses in basic education at the Naval Academy I have described clearly indicate a failure on the part of the Navy and officials of the Naval Academy to recognize the true educational process and its paramount importance in professional development of naval officers.

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$5 a column inch
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This is where we sign up new subscribers. If you would like to receive THE IDLER each month, just fill out the form below and mail it with your check or money order.

Incidentally, THE IDLER, as a service to its subscribers, runs a free classified section. On a space available basis, subscribers may insert a brief ad of any sort other than one selling a product or service. THE IDLER reserves the right to edit all ads. There is no cost for this service. Requests for ads must be submitted each month if they are to be repeated. THE IDLER assumes no responsibility for transactions. Ads must be received by the 1st of the preceding month to be published in the next issue.

— —

To: THE IDLER
125 Fifth St. NE
Washington 2, D.C.

Please enter my subscription to THE IDLER for one year at $6.00 ($7.00 abroad). I enclose check or money order in the proper amount.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

☐ Please insert the enclosed free classified ad in the next issue of THE IDLER (for subscribers only):

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"In summary, I think if you are going to continue supporting the Naval Academy, you should insure that it performs its proper function of educating naval officers for the Navy of today and tomorrow, not the past. If it cannot reform itself, you might consider whether it is worth the effort and expense to have it continue."

These criticisms are relevant because, in large part, the military operates on an extension of the principles of its academies. The superior is taught to treat a junior in the manner of an upperclassman dealing with a plebe and the junior is meant to take it in stride, happily contented that his leaders are doing it for his own good.

This principle applies to relations between officers of different ranks as well as between officers and enlisted men. Not that the life of even a subordinate officer isn't pleasant enough. One former officer described his tour of duty this way:

"For the past few years I have enjoyed the glorious life of a junior grade nobleman. My wants were cared for. I had a title. I was saluted and called 'Sir.' Philippino stewards were at my call. I shared my drinking and eating hours with fellow noblemen at comfortable sanctuaries called officer's clubs and wardrooms. I received respect from my subordinates or was free to force it. I could be petty, sadistic or paranoic, and still be praised for setting a good example of discipline. My subjects had to cater to my every whim. They could not quit or disobey. I had no labor union to contend with and no obligation to listen to criticism from those under me. At inspections, I could make myself feel important by handing out gigs for dusty peacoats, firmly convinced that I was thus 'training men.' I could make pompous pronouncements and there was no one to call me a fool. If my ego demanded it, I could stab the ego of those under me, satisfied all the time that I was 'shaping up the men.' It was a great life."

The only problem is that military officers are not appointed by the President and approved by Congress to provide an otherwise democratic country with a little nobility, but to get a job done: to run ships, fly ships, fly planes, fight wars.

Having an officer corps that is immature, antiquated, egocentric and status-obsessed in no way helps to accomplish this mission.

Tris Coffin, in his book *Passion of the Hawks* notes, "The officer finds himself in a kind of Oriental court, buzzing with palace conspiracies and filled with highly improbable rituals."

The rituals, the values, and the rules are all part of a military myth, the myth that traditional concepts of military leadership are always the most efficient means of administering men and equipment in any place, circumstance, or age.

The service academies are the great protectors of the myth. The Academy graduate who has taken the teachings of his education too seriously is deceived by the myth; enlisted men and officers not yet brainwashed are not.

They do not believe in the myth because it simply does not work in the omnipotent and unfailing manner that its believers suppose. A business school graduate, for example, may find that his academic training offers him more useful insight into personnel management than do military manuals on leadership. Or the intuitive common sense of a corporal may suggest better means of dealing with his men than the cliches of his superiors.

The gulf between the myth believer and non-believers is widened by the growing sophistication of enlisted personnel.

Today less than 15% of enlisted personnel are assigned conventional combat duties. Twenty percent are in electronics and other technical specialties, jobs that require intelligence, initiative and judgement.

The day of the common foot soldier and the engineroom black gang is over. The nuclear age and guerilla

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wars have brought an unceasing demand for constantly changing tactics, strategy and administrative procedures, all placing increased responsibilities on every individual involved from the private to the general.

But despite empirical evidence, such as the results achieved by the highly pragmatic training of the Special Forces, many military leaders decline to act in an empirical manner. Their heros are still the British officers mounting the ridge, armed only with a swagger stick, providing pseudo-divine inspiration for their men until they are shot down by the first bullet.

In wartime myths often bring an early death to their believers. In peacetime they feed upon themselves and become increasingly more ridiculous. During fleet exercises in the Atlantic, for example, a carrier under the command of a senior naval officer was subjected to repeated mock attack by a submarine. The submarine's commanding officer, much junior to the carrier's, was certain that his attacks had been successful. But each time the superior, concerned with his own fitness report, sent back a signal: "Evaluate your attack as unsuccessful due to my excessive speed."

Finally, in total frustration, the sub fired six actual though unarmed torpedoes at the carrier, neatly placed the entire length of the larger vessel. As the tubes bounced off the carrier's side, the sub surfaced and sent the signal: "How do you evaluate this one?"

To the military mind one is either right or wrong. In cases of conflict, it necessarily must be the superior who is right. Therefore, discussion and critical analysis prior to making decisions is greatly inhibited. The superior must be infallible or the whole house of cards tumbles.

A sad example of this was revealed during a U. S. Naval inquiry board looking into charges that a Marine corporal had mistreated recruits.

The corporal admitted that he had ordered five or six men who made drilling mistakes to do disciplinary calisthenics in a prone position. He continued marching the others, and in so doing, ordered a rear march that accidentally brought the platoon over the men on the ground.

Noticing his mistake, he ordered another rear march which brought most of the men over the prone recruits a second time.

According to a news report, the corporal said that, as the platoon instructor, he did not want the men to know that he had made a mistake, so he warned them, "If you don't march in step, you'll be down there too."

The corporal was acting in accordance with honored military principles. He would rather be considered a sadist than a fallible superior.

Service personnel policies are also repeatedly directed towards keeping the recalcitrant few in line rather than exacting the maximum from all the others. The discipline system is heavily based on alternate rewards and punishments that treat men like children. It is easy to learn the proper Pablovian reaction. It is harder and more important to instill in a man drives that will cause him to to his best, whether threatened with a court-martial or not.

This he will never do if he learns only to wait for the next button to be pushed so that he can run to the right corner. Enlisted men who stay in the service discover how to survive in such a system. They learn not to volunteer, not to take unnecessary risks, not to rock the boat. When asked for advice they learn to reply, "Anything you say, Sir," an attitude that leads men into ambushes, sinks ships, and causes planes to go down.

Discipline in the service is enforced by the Uniform Code of Military Justice and much more time is spent teaching officers how to conduct themselves during an investigation and trial than is spent on training them to run units in which court-martials are an infrequent occurrance.

Often an initial brush with military justice is followed by another and another until the man is finally ripe for a bad-conduct discharge. The

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military generally is not interested in reform. As soon as the punishment is meted out, the job is done.

There have been efforts to make military justice a little more constructive. At Amarillo, Tex., an experiment in retraining men who have run afoul of the military system is underway with encouraging results. Sixty-five per cent of those assigned to the retraining school have returned to duty in the Air Force, their bad-conduct discharges suspended. Eighty-four per cent of those who do go back complete their hitch without further incident.

But to spend the time and effort necessary to help those in trouble goes against the military grain. "You don't have time to give personal attention to every man," an officer will proclaim, despite the fact that in peacetime, if there is one thing the military does have it is time.

The truth is that many men get into trouble in the military or learn to hate the system because they are alone, without adequate guidance, lost in giant, unrelenting machines. The officer corps, while inheriting much of the class-consciousness of past centuries, has happily forgotten the ancient obligations that went along with privilege: *Noblesse oblige*. Today class distinction in the military is a one-way street. The man on top gets all the benefits.

Too often superiors are afraid to show generally accepted human virtues of kindness or concern towards their subordinates in the fear that this somehow weakens their position. The academies teach their students a concept of leadership that places great emphasis on the big show. The upperclassmen drill it into the plebes and they never forget. One more stripe is always better than wisdom, courage or intelligence. Put on a big enough performance and incompetence and inadequacy will be concealed and you too will be a leader.

Actually, the very fact that military seniors have such broad power over their juniors eliminates the necessity for strutting martinets and the protective shields they provide themselves.

Gen. Robert E. Lee had a keen sense of this. "The power," he said, "which the strong have over the weak, the magistrate over the citizen, the employer over the employed, the educated over the unlettered, the experienced over the confiding, even the clever over the silly — the forbearing or inoffensive use of all this or a total absence from it when the case admits it, will show the gentleman in a plain light."

Here then is the military world a man contemplating a service career must consider. It is a world of strange and ludicrous rituals. It is a world of plebes and upperclassmen, a world of either right or wrong.

It is a world in which one's abilities are recognized only insofar as they coincide with one's rank. It is a world in which relationships between superiors and subordinates are carried out under archaic and artificial rules. It is a world in which tradition is more important than pragmatism. It is a world in which success comes to he who is best at not rocking the boat. It is a world in which sophomoric values learned by cadets and midshipmen become part of the philosophy of supposedly adult men. It is a world in which one often feels like a test rabbit in a labyrinth, receiving a carrot if you find the exit and an electric shock if you fail.

Above all it is a world in which the rational fails to prevail. Every culture, every organization, has its myths, rituals, and illogical facets. It is a matter of balance. To the average individual considering a service career the military clearly appears to have lost its sense of balance.

The man who has not been educated to have childlike faith in the system looks at it and says, "This is crazy."

Too often he is right. There is a real need for the military to reorganize its policies on a more rational basis

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in order to attract and keep intelligent, useful individuals in the service.

Military leaders have got to stop thinking of themselves as romantic figures charging up the slopes of history and realize that they are essentially managers and administrators. They should stop worrying so much about Private X going AWOL and start worrying more about how to get Private X to do a more efficient job. They should seek more effective techniques of operations, freely breaking traditions whenever necessary. And they should not be afraid to treat subordinates with respect and dignity.

Would reforms have to bring a breakdown in the military man's beloved discipline? Definitely not. It is the immature, irrational system that creates discipline problems and not the mature, rational one, in which each individual feels a responsibility for the whole.

As long as officers are trained to think like children and enlisted men are treated like children, the relatively mature individual will be dissatisfied in the military and when the chance comes to be transferred to COMCIV-CONUS, chances are that he'll go.

In our September issue we mentioned the irrelevancy of brain size as an indication of intelligence. Anthropologist Ashley Montague brings this point home by noting that two of the largest brains on record belonged to an idiot and a U.S. Senator.

There is impressive new evidence that the United States could engage in total disarmament without wrecking the economy. A clipping from *The New York Times* brings us the good tidings:

"John W. Kunstadter, a former nuclear physicist, was named yesterday executive vice president in charge of merchandise for the Formwear Company . . . Formwear markets foundation garments."

POETS OF THE MORNING HOUR

By Edward P. Morgan

Behind the facade of official propriety, a testy tug-of-war continues between the persons of Lyndon Baines Johnson and Robert Francis Kennedy. Nobody ever accused the president and the junior senator-elect from New York of trying to outpractice Damon and Pythias in the art of friendship but they have managed to project a public image of political congeniality, especially during the pressures of the recent campaign against the Republicans. In their respective triumphs, however, rivalry has been rekindled between these two dynamic and ambitious men and a spark of it flashed out at the most unexpected time and place: the ground-breaking ceremony for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on the banks of the Potomac.

Senator Kennedy, now the elder, on that auspicious occasion, made the bold if not reckless observation — however true — that the level of Congressional culture left something to be desired. He recalled the admonition of the ambitious mother who cried, "Don't teach my son poetry. I want him to run for Congress." A reading of the *Congressional Record*, the former attorney general concluded, would lay to rest any anxieties that the elected inhabitants of the national capitol were in danger of qualifying as bards, as laureates in the tradition of Masefield or Frost.

This, manifestly, was too much for the 36th president of the United States.

From the ABC Radio program "Edward P. Morgan and the News," sponsored by the AFL-CIO.

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Into his own address, brimming with promise to continue the Kennedy tradition of encouragement to the arts, President Johnson sandwiched, with a tolerant smile, this ad lib comment: "As a veteran of 24 years in the Congress," he said, "I am not a prophet but I do want to suggest to my friend, the new Senator from New York, he is in for listening to more poetry than he would surmise in some of the morning sessions of the Senate."

Singing Quality

Truer words were never spoken, depending on your definition of poetry. The morning hour, as the interval after the opening of the noon session of the Senate is traditionally called, reeks with the riches of hyperbolic verbosity. It is a veritable treasure house of exhausted aphorisms and crumpled cliches, gems to decorate the crowning oratorical tributes of senators to a laudatory editorial of a fallen friend — or a fish.

Take, for instance, the iambic pentameter of Alaska's Senator Bartlett in the *Congressional Record* of last September 29, in extolling the qualities of the Alaska salmon. "There is," he exulted in introducing for the *Record* an optimistic article on the salmon's future, "no finer food fish in the world . . ."

With no attempt to defend the clam or the Cheasapeake Bay oyster, Senator Brewster of Maryland then waxed lyrical about the distinctions of a reporter on the *Baltimore Sun* and had incorporated in the *Record* his dispatch on the fringe of Appalachia that extends into the seaboard state.

In that same September morning hour there was a salute in the Wurlitzer tones of Senator Dirksen to one Nathaniel Leverone, founder of the Automatic Canteen Company of America, who was about to receive, in connection with National Bible Week, a citation from the Laymen's National Committee, Incorporated, for his "many years of devoted service to the cause of Christianity." And the first order of business, after the morning hour was finished, involved a bill for the relief of a man with the poetic name of Rollo Oskey.

Wurlitzer Tone

The senators are at their golden best when eulogizing somebody — or some ornamental virtue of their respective states. The autumn retirement of Jerry O'Leary, Sr., Capitol Hill correspondent of the *Washington Evening Star*, after 50 years of reporting, deservingly won more than two pages of encomiums from the upper chamber including that of Majority Leader Mansfield who called him

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"one of the finest, gentlest, fairest and kindest men I have ever known."

In that same session, Senator Robertson of Virginia, with the unpoetic license traditionally accepted in Congress, got printed in the *Record* the entire text of a 26-year-old speech he had made to the Daughters of the American Revolution on the occasion of the planting of a scarlet oak tree as an emblem of the perpetuity of constitutional government. A quarter of a century had not muted its singing quality.

One of the happiest devices in the proceedings of Congress is the extention of remarks. This is the practice of printing in an appendix to the *Record* speeches and other remarks that thus never have to be given. You might say this quickens the rhythm of government. Indeed the idea raises the challenging question of whether all political speeches, on the floor and off, might not be so handled.

Although President Johnson was talking primarily of the poetry of the Senate morning hour, the House of Representatives shows its own matchless talents in the extension of remarks. Indeed Congressman Roman C. Pucinski of Illinois reproduced a 20-line poem of five verses dedicated to one of his constituents, Mrs. Anna Strojny, who was described as a fighting lobbyist for the medicare bill. Such cultural jewels should not be lost. Would it not be fitting to bury under the cornerstone of the Kennedy Center a selected bundle of *Congressional Records?* Deep under, that is.

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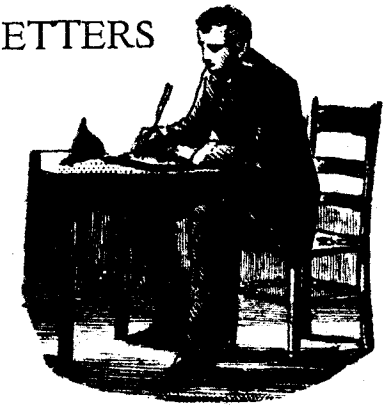
LETTERS



OFF-YELLOW

It is indeed appropriate that your magazine is printed on off-yellow paper because what you print is often just slightly off-yellow journalism. I am referring particularly to that infantile piece of second rate mudslinging that you and the Honorable Wright Patman scraped up with your directionless and almost toothless muckrake for your December 1964 issue. There were so many outright distortions in the article and so much language offensive both to sense and sensibility that I was tempted to write a paragraph by paragraph answer. I will, however, limit myself to one general observation and two specific points in the hope that such expurgation will relieve my soul of the venom I feel.

First: by reprinting this speech THE IDLER has chosen to sit (for it is becoming clear that THE IDLER will sit rather than stand pat) with those who hold the most childish and even reprehensible view of American history and American life. That is—THE IDLER has chosen to subscribe to the conspiracy view of American life and thereby takes his seat with the bigoted populists of all ages — from Pitchfork Ben Tillman to the Josephs McCarthy and Welch—who always see one evil group controlling the destiny of America. It seems a shame that THE IDLER should sit for such a view which is only the liberal counterpart

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of a Birch belch. Substitute communism, and com-symp or pinko, for "The Fed" and "New York Bankers" in the speech and it becomes one that the den mother of any local Birch society could easily and profitably use.

The move from saying "high interest rate devotees are the insiders" who control money which "is more important than any other part of our economy" to saying that "com-symps and pinkos are the insiders who control our government which is more important than any other part of our society" is an easy and painless step.

The perfidious insidiousness of the article is only exceeded by its objectionable inanity. Could you not be more intelligent than to support the quote at the beginning of the article which reads, "The United States is the only great power in which monetary policy is not subject to the firm control of the incumbent administration?" I might just mention that the U.S. is also the only great power in which policies concerning education, marriage, sex, traffic, gambling, broadcasting and television, electric power, religion, game hunting, transportation, the selection of olympic athletes, voting rights, and the rating of hotels, is not in the firm control of the incumbent administration as they are entirely or severally in Great Britain, France, East and West Germany, Russia, China, Italy, Brazil, Pakistan, and Dubai. It is one of the mixed blessings of a federalist system of government that most powers — even some of the most important ones — should by definition and intention *not* rest with the incumbent administration. I will not go into the substantive argument that a continuing, decentralized, monetary policy may indeed be better for a continuing, decentralized economy than one which changes with every inaugural parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, but it might be instructive for THE IDLER at least to consider such a thought.

And last, may I comment on Mr. Hayes' salary. It seems an incredibly unobservant oversight that THE IDLER does not see that Mr. Hayes is the only high public official in this country who draws a salary commensurate with his responsibilities. I agree that it is shameful for Mr. Hayes to draw each year $70,000 of the taxpayers' money while his immediate boss, Mr. Martin, receives only $20,000 and the Vice President of the United States and the Justices of the Supreme Court only $30,000. (But let THE IDLER not forget that Mr. Kappel of A. T. and T. receives roughly $200,000 a year as a base salary and the president of G. M. about $600,000.) Mr. Hayes of the New York Federal Reserve Board is not overpaid, it should be clear, but rather the rest of the higher ranks of the Federal service is underpaid. Mr. Hayes salary is exceptional, but it is exceptional in its fairness and not in its excess. Let THE IDLER campaign to bring other governmental salaries up to his level, and not to bring the one just salary in the higher ranks of government down to the unjust level of the others.

I think, Sir, that I have made myself clear. If THE IDLER wishes to plop off his easy chair into the muck of idea mongering, thought adulteration, and word peddling he should be honest enough to remove the dignified word "rational" from the masthead of his magazine. Should he, however, chose to honor the stated intentions of his journal he need only be more thoughtful in choosing speeches to reprint and support. After all, there is not enough room in one easy chair for honest journalism and dirty politics.

Lawrence G. Smith

New York City

Mr. Smith is a banker.—Ed.

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DESALINATION

One of President Johnson's particular interests is the federal desalination program. Here's a background report:

Behind the initiation of the saline water program lay widespread fears of future water shortages in the United States. One group, the Senate Select Committee on National Water Resources, estimated in its 1961 final report that U.S. water use would jump from 300 billion gallons daily in 1954 to 888 billion by the year 2000. If a low-cost method of converting sea and brackish water into fresh water could be found, it was contended, then the nation would have an important reserve against the day when the supply of natural fresh water might prove inadequate.

When the federal saline water program began in 1952, the cost of converting sea water to fresh water by methods then available ranged from $4 per 1,000 gallons upward, which was far higher than the cost of natural fresh water. The primary aim of the new federal program was to reduce conversion costs to a level that would make the use of saline water economically feasible for drinking, industrial and similar purposes.

Although saline water conversion costs were reduced impressively from 1952 on, they are still too high in relation to the costs of natural fresh water to permit any widespread use of saline water in the United States. Municipalities and other suppliers charge about 35 cents per 1,000 gallons, including the costs of delivering the water to customers, for natural fresh water to be used for municipal and industrial purposes (bathing, drinking, cooking, etc.). In many areas, the price is substantially below 35 cents. For natural fresh water for irrigation purposes prices range from a few cents to 10-12 cents per 1,000 gallons.

By contrast, the federal saline water demonstration plants operating in 1964 were converting sea water to fresh water at a cost of $1-to-$1.25 per 1,000 gallons, which was far too high to compete with natural fresh water.

However, a 1964 report by the Office of Science and Technology predicted that, with a high-level research and development program, it would be possible by about 1975 to build combined nuclear electricity-saline water conversion plants capable of producing 500 to 800 million gallons of water a day at a cost of 20-25 cents per 1,000 gallons, plus delivery charges. Costs that low would make saline water conversion economically attractive in many areas for production of municipal water, although still too costly for irrigation water.

In a major 1964 development, the Interior Department announced the signing of an agreement with the Atomic Energy Commission and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (a water-scarce area) for studies of a combination nuclear electricity-saline water conversion plant for Southern California. The proposed plant, if it proves feasible, would supply between 50 and 150 million gallons of water a day and generate from 150,000 to 750,000 kilowatts of electric power. The study is designed to determine the costs at which the proposed plant could produce water and electricity and, on the basis of those costs, whether the plant would be economically feasible.

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ADVERTISEMENTS

1. **Commission-based Ads.** Our policy is explained elsewhere in this issue. **Where only an Idler box number is listed, readers should include a five cent stamp so their inquiry may be quickly forwarded to the advertiser.**

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3. **Paid Classified Advertising:** Ten cents a word.

4. **Other Paid Advertising:** See elsewhere in this issue for rates.

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WANTED: One used "Assimil" French course in at least relatively good condition. Write L. S., Apt. 2C, 7005 Shore Road, Brooklyn 9, N. Y.

The Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC has recently been formed on college campuses to work for a new South in the areas of civil rights, academic freedom, capital punishment, poverty and other relevant social and political issues. Write for additional information and newsletter. 915 18th Ave. S., Nashville, Tenn.

EDITOR'S NOTES

THANKS to ER, Cranston, R. I.; Mrs. RS, DC; DD, NYC; D&SC, Bristol, RI; LS, Japan; AC, DC.

TO SK, DC—You're right. Uncle Abner does tell some old jokes. But then he's an old man.

CR, Groton, Conn.—The reason you couldn't vote was explained on page 26 of our October issue. If it's any comfort, you were one of an estimated 8 million in the same boat. That should be enough to sink any boat. BT.

BACK-ISSUE INDEX

Each month, THE IDLER prints an index of articles from past issues that have continuing interest. While they last, these back issues may be ordered from THE IDLER, 125 5th St. NE, Washington 2, D. C. at 50c a copy. Please enclose the proper amount. We can not bill. Out of print issues are indicated by OOP.

DRAFT—Sen. Gaylord Nelson argues for an end to the draft. (Jan. '65) OOP —Review of legislation not acted upon by the 88th Congress (Jan. '65)

FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD — Rep. Wright Patman examines some of the deficiencies in the Federal Reserve system. (Dec. '64) OOP

PUERTO RICO—Contains useful historical information and a look ahead. (Nov. '64)

TITANIC—New light on the role of the **Californian** in the **Titanic** disaster. (Oct. '64)

VOTING REGISTRATION—Why millions are disenfranchised by restrictive registration laws. (Oct. '64)

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